



**Keep it
short!**

The more there is to read,
the less your audience
will want to read it.

Make sure your
writing is short.

20

Keep sentences to **20 words or fewer**

5

Keep paragraphs to **5 sentences or fewer**

Become a better writer:

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Chunk it!

**No one wants to read
a wall of words.**

Most readers skim documents
instead of reading every word.
Help your readers get your
main points.

1

Include a **short, clear main message** at the top of
your document

7

Use short paragraphs and bulleted lists. Keep lists to
fewer than 7 items, and don't use sub-bullets.

1-3

Use a **relevant** and **specific heading** for every
1-3 paragraphs

For example: "ATSDR Study Looks at Lead Contamination"

Instead of: "Overview"

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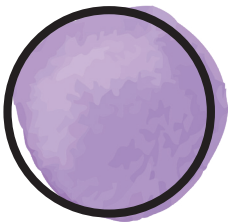


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Use Active Voice!

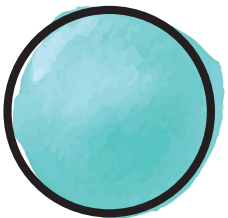
Passive voice is wordy, but active voice is concise and direct. Passive voice is formal, but active voice sounds more like speech (*making it easier to understand*).



Use passive voice only when the **subject is unknown** or of **less importance**.

Passive Voice: “About 500 homes were left without water as a result of the chemical spill.”

Active Voice: “The chemical spill left 500 homes without water.”



Strengthen your sentences further by **keeping the subject and verb close together**.

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